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Bosnia Options After June 1998: Summary of a CRS/GAO Seminar

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Summary

A seminar held on November 6, 1997, cosponsored by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the General Accounting Office (GAO), considered options for the Bosnia peace operation after June 1998, the expiration date of the current NATO operation. On December 18, President Clinton announced his support in principle for a continued NATO presence in Bosnia, including U.S. troops, beyond June 1998. NATO is expected to decide on a post-SFOR force in early 1998. At the November seminar, speakers reviewed progress to date in implementing the Dayton peace agreement, the performance of the NATO Stabilization Force (SFOR), and offered perspectives on U.S. and allied interests in Bosnia. This report summarizes some of the presentations and discussion themes from that seminar.

Seminar participants agreed on the probable need for an external military presence in Bosnia beyond mid-1998 if a resumption of warfare is to be avoided. Speakers offered different perspectives on the achievements to date, but concurred that the peace remained fragile and would need considerably more time to become self-sustaining. The Dayton framework, while flawed, was upheld as the only remaining basis for future policy. Many tasks, such as refugee return and police reform and restructuring, were thought to require urgent attention. Some speakers highlighted the importance of removing indicted war criminals from their positions of influence. None foresaw an early exit; none addressed military options if SFOR or its successor were to encounter fierce resistance by the Bosnian parties.

On the future multilateral force, participants speculated that it would remain a NATO force and that the United States would continue to participate with some forces. Perspectives on the suitable structure, mission, and duration of the future force were offered. One speaker presented an outline for moving from a U.S.-led to a European-led force, both under NATO. Another emphasized a focus on implementation tasks rather than another rigid timeframe for the future force. On the question of U.S. interests in Bosnia and the U.S. role, participants presented different viewpoints but cited sufficient interests to render a pull-out unlikely and engender a significant U.S. role in Bosnia for some time to come. Speakers differed on the proper extent and scope of the U.S. role. Some pointed to the unique deterrent function and key military assets that the United States has brought to the NATO operations. They claimed a special U.S. responsibility and commitment to the peace agreement, to NATO, and to stability in Europe. Others pointed to other U.S. global commitments and the competing costs, in terms of financial resources and military readiness, of a long-term military commitment to Bosnia. This perspective emphasized moving toward a greater European role, while working within an existing NATO framework and maintaining a continued supporting (but not leading) U.S. role. In contrast, the European allies emphasized their past and existing contributions to peace efforts in Bosnia and the current balance of responsibilities. Public opinion polls revealed no pressing current urge from the U.S. public to bring home U.S. troops from Bosnia, but showed a certain ambivalence about the U.S. military role there.

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Introduction[1]

Following the signing of the Dayton peace agreement in December 1995, NATO deployed a multinational Implementation Force (IFOR) of about 55,000 troops to carry out the military provisions of the Dayton accords for a period of one year. NATO decided to deploy a smaller successor mission, the Stabilization Force (SFOR, currently with about 34,000 troops), to Bosnia after IFOR's mandate expired, for an additional 18-month period. U.S. military forces have served in both IFOR and SFOR, and currently number about 8,500 troops. Numerous U.S. civilian agencies, personnel, and financial resources have also contributed to international efforts to implement provisions of the Dayton peace agreement. U.S. costs for military and civilian operations from Fiscal Year 1996 to 1998 are estimated to be nearly $8 billion.[2]

In November 1996, President Clinton justified the continued U.S. military engagement in a NATO follow-on force in Bosnia on the grounds that the United States had a responsibility to see its commitment through and an interest in helping to give peace in Bosnia a chance to become lasting. He stated that SFOR's mission should be completed and its forces would withdraw by June 1998. In recent months, Administration officials have said that, while the peace process in Bosnia has made gains in last two years, especially in the most recent months, peace is not likely to be self-sustaining if international troops withdraw after the end of SFOR's mandate in June 1998. Therefore an external military presence is likely to be required after June 1998 in order to maintain peace. NATO has not yet made any final decision on a post-SFOR mission, but is expected to do so in early 1998. On December 18, 1997, prior to a visit to Bosnia, President Clinton announced that the United States would take part in a NATO security presence in Bosnia when SFOR withdraws after June 1998. Congress has prohibited funding for the deployment of U.S. forces to Bosnia beyond June 1998 unless the President certify that the continued presence of U.S. forces is required in order to meet U.S. national security interests.

In this context, the Congressional Research Service and the General Accounting Office, at the request of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, cosponsored a seminar on November 6, 1997. The topic was "Bosnia: U.S. Options After June 1998." Representatives of the U.S. Administration and foreign governments, as well as non-government experts offered diverse perspectives on a broad range of related subjects, including progress in peace implementation, options for a post-SFOR military operation, U.S. and allied interests in Bosnia, and implications for future policy (for a list of panelists, see **Appendix**). This report is intended to be a synthesis of key themes raised by seminar participants, and does not include the entire content and sequence of the presentations and discussions at the November 6 seminar.

Summary Conclusions

The intent of the November 6 seminar was to examine issues related to the debate over a possible post-SFOR force, not to produce a single consensus view or specific policy recommendations. Nevertheless, by the end of the seminar a number of broad themes relevant to the current Bosnia debate emerged. As part of a summary statement, Stanley Sloan of the Congressional Research Service identified numerous areas of convergence as well as divergence within these themes.

[1] **For background on the conflicts in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia, see U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Bosnia, former Yugoslavia and U.S. Policy, by Steve Woehrel and Julie Kim, CRS Issue Brief 91089, updated regularly.**

[2] U.S. General Accounting Office. *Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward Achieving the Dayton Agreement's Goals-An Update*. GAO/NSIAD-97-216. July 17, 1997.

The first theme concerned the situation in Bosnia and prospects for a durable peace there. Some speakers examined the question of whether Bosnia was somehow predestined to conflict, or at least more susceptible to inter-ethnic conflict as a result of its historical legacy. Some panelists acknowledged Bosnia's recent history of bloody conflict, but also pointed to the very soft distinguishing characteristics between the different ethnic groups and the lack of precedent for ethnically based territorial divisions. Many speakers identified numerous flaws and contradictions in the Dayton peace agreement. For example, the successful implementation of the military aspects of the Dayton agreement has enforced a certain separation between the Bosnian parties, while the civilian side of implementation, which has been less successful, has attempted to overcome this separation. Some of these flaws have led some observers to question the value or wisdom of upholding Dayton for the foreseeable future. At the seminar, no speaker supported any specific alternative to the Dayton framework as the basis for future policy. First-hand observers to the implementation process in Bosnia identified numerous achievements that have been reached, especially in recent months, but expressed concerns that most of these gains could be quickly and completely reversed if fighting were to resume.

A second set of issues concerned the question of a continued external military presence in Bosnia beyond June 1998. There was near total convergence among seminar participants that such a presence will be required if armed conflict is not to be resumed. Less agreement was evident about the possible goals of a future military mission, or its suitable composition. On the question of the possibility of U.S. participation in this military presence, most of the speakers portrayed U.S. involvement as extremely likely, even though no formal decision by the Clinton Administration had yet been announced at the time of this conference. Views on the proper extent and duration of U.S. participation, however, varied. In part, these divergences reflected different assessments of the level of U.S. interests at stake in the future of the peace process in Bosnia.

Some speakers asserted that the United States maintained an interest in seeing the Dayton agreement, an agreement reached as a result of U.S. leadership, fully implemented. They identified specific key tasks in civil implementation that remained incomplete, such as the return of refugees, enhancing law and order through reformed police structures, building functioning civic institutions, and bringing war criminals to justice. They contended that the fulfillment of these goals was tantamount to securing a sustainable peace in Bosnia. Other speakers emphasized the parties' responsibilities for implementing these tasks and predicted little further progress in the reintegration of Bosnia's divided communities. This perspective suggests, as outlined in a recent news article, that the real U.S. interest in Bosnia may be limited to securing stability in Bosnia, not nation-building or reconstructing a multi-ethnic Bosnia as it was before the war.[3]

U.S. strategic interests in preventing a resumption of war in Europe, in ensuring the success of the unprecedented NATO missions, and in providing global leadership were also cited. Some speakers referred to the specific and unique military capabilities and status that U.S. forces have brought to the NATO operations in Bosnia. Others cited the strain of the ongoing Bosnia operation on U.S. military readiness globally. From a public opinion perspective, polls indicated no great pressure to bring U.S. troops home, but possibly rather a receptive public attitude to an extended U.S. engagement. Polls did reveal public concerns about whether the U.S. was handling more than its "fair share" of the operation and whether the operation was succeeding in its mission.

The question of whether the Europeans can or should take on more responsibility for the military presence in Bosnia elicited a spirited discussion. Many U.S. speakers expressed a desire to see the Europeans take on a larger military role. European representatives responded that European

[3] Hockstader, Lee. "In Bosnia, Peace on Paper but Not in Practice," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 1997, p. A1.

countries already assume a majority role in Bosnia and would like to uphold the current proportionality of responsibility. Speakers agreed that any future external military presence in Bosnia should remain a NATO force, which would imply that some U.S. military personnel would remain involved in some capacity. The main issue for some of the speakers was whether and how this next NATO mission could at least move in the direction of an all-European force.

Stanley Sloan of CRS raised a final summary element, a possible "wild card" factor related to the situation with war criminals in Bosnia. If decisions are made to go after some or all remaining war criminals, the results could prove to be a turning point in the potential for Bosnia's peaceful reintegration. Negative results and possible casualties could force a major reassessment of the military operation in Bosnia and of the overall direction of international policy. On December 18, SFOR launched a second snatch operation against two Bosnian Croat war criminals, both of whom were then transferred to the Hague war crimes tribunal.[4] NATO has not revealed if additional operations are being prepared.

SFOR and Dayton: Objectives and Progress To Date

Dayton: A Reasonable Objective?

One of the greatest challenges to any peace settlement is to promote cooperation and integration where violence and enmity prevailed during war. The brutality of the war in Bosnia, its high civilian toll, and its focus on ethnic identity in the commission of war crimes have exacerbated this challenge of peace and reconciliation. Some observers view the war in Bosnia as only the most recent example of conflict and violence in the former Yugoslavia, and evidence that the different ethnic groups there cannot live together in peace. Others contend that the war resulted from a deliberate manipulation by political authorities of latent ethnic antagonisms, and that most of the population in Bosnia today opposes any return to war.

The peace agreement reached at Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995 represented a compromise on many different levels. It acknowledged the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska -- the Bosnian Serb Republic -- but accorded it the status of a sub-state entity, and upheld Bosnia's external borders and continuation as a single state. It perpetuated the cease-fire line (adjusted to become the Inter-Entity Boundary Line--IEBL) between the parties' armed forces, but envisioned common civic institutions on the political level that would overcome this division. It insisted on the principle of the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their pre-war homes, but provided no means of securing their returns to still-hostile territory. Similarly, in the interest of justice and eventual reconciliation it demanded the surrender of all indicted war criminals to an international criminal court, but made no further specifications on how to achieve this goal. Overall, the Dayton peace agreement pledged considerable resources and effort on the part of the international community, but placed primary responsibility for implementation of the terms of the accord on the signatory parties.

Prospects for Dayton's ultimate success or failure are difficult to estimate. John Lampe of the Wilson Center characterized Dayton as a prescription for confederal connections between the two entities (in reality, three entities, if one considers the still largely separate Croat and Bosniak communities in the Federation), where labor and capital can freely cross boundaries and where ethnic minorities are able to resettle with security. He offered the year 2000 as a possible milestone for when Bosnia might achieve a stable legal framework for economic recovery,

[4] The first operation against indicted war criminals took place on July 10, 1997. One Bosnian Serb suspect was killed in a shoot-out; the second was transferred to the Hague.

employment, and private foreign investment, though other speakers predicted that more time would be needed. The concept of confederal links can bridge the gap between the drive by some for "separateness" and the necessity for some degree of cooperation between the three communities, not one of which is or historically has ever been the majority population in Bosnia. Mr. Lampe noted the historical continuity of Bosnia's existence as a single administrative unit under roughly the same borders through different historical periods.[5]

Former U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia John Menzies placed greater emphasis on the vision of a united Bosnia. According to Mr. Menzies, the model for the two Bosnian entities is not the formerly divided East and West Berlin but the administratively divided West Virginia and Virginia. He suggested that, under this vision, the IEBL will become no more significant than the borders between neighboring U.S. states. In his view, outside assistance targeted on economic reconstruction, democratic institutions, and the development of civil society can do a great deal to promote cohesion and integration of the Bosnian entities.

At the seminar, discussions regarding achievements to date in implementing Dayton (see following section) revealed no consensus on Dayton's long-term viability. Different speakers pointed to the significant achievements reached since Dayton, and specially noted some recent milestones in the arrest and surrender of a few war criminals and the return of some refugees across ethnic lines. Others, however, expressed a concern that these achievements were not irreversible, and could erode if not further consolidated.

At the same time, no specific alternatives to the Dayton framework were promoted. Speakers lent little credence to recent proposals to encourage an ethnic partition of Bosnia,[6] since this course was seen by some to lead to certain renewed fighting in Bosnia and would serve as a destabilizing model for other ethnically-mixed regions. At the same time, most speakers acknowledged that ethnic divisions in Bosnia have not been overcome. Consensus was only apparent on the need for additional time beyond June 1998 for peace to take root. Some discussants noted that widespread awareness of the need for a long period of time for Bosnia to heal had existed from the beginning of the Dayton process. This awareness appeared at odds with NATO's approach of setting deadlines for both the IFOR and SFOR missions.

SFOR Objectives

The Dayton peace agreement effectively halted the long war in Bosnia (also involving Croatia and Serbia) and provided a framework for a lasting peace. The overarching goal of international efforts to implement all aspects of the Dayton peace agreement is to consolidate the peace to a sufficient level to become self-sustaining. To that end, the international community called upon numerous international organizations to assist in numerous security-related and civic institution-building processes. NATO's task was to deploy an Implementation Force (IFOR) to carry out the military provisions outlined in the Dayton peace agreement; the U.N. Security Council later authorized the Stabilization Force to succeed IFOR for an additional 18-month period.

This segment of the seminar addressed the stated objectives of the NATO peace operation and NATO's desired end-state in Bosnia at the end of the operation's deployment. Mr. Bernd McConnell, Director of the Bosnia Task Force at the Department of Defense, emphasized that

[5] See also Lampe, John R. *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was A Country*. Cambridge University Press: 1996.

[6] For examples of arguments favoring a partition of Bosnia, see O'Hanlon, Michael, "Bosnia: Better Left Partitioned," *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1997; Novak, Robert D., "Sen. Hutchison's Way Out," *The Washington Post*, September 11, 1997; and Rosenthal, A.M., "Solution for Bosnia," *The New York Times*, September 26, 1997.

NATO, as one "contractor" to the Dayton process, maintains the same objectives outlined in the Dayton agreement. The goals of Dayton can be summarized as follows:[7]

Dayton Peace Agreement Goals

- ***End the war.***
- ***Provide security for the people of Bosnia.***
- ***Create a unified, democratic Bosnia within internationally recognized boundaries.***
- ***Rebuild the Bosnian economy.***
- ***Ensure the right of people to return to their homes.***

Source: Department of Defense, DPA

Since NATO is not responsible for all of these goals, the focus of NATO's operations in Bosnia has been more narrowly defined by its military mission -- upholding the cease-fire, organizing the separation of armies, and supervising the collection of heavy weapons. Though IFOR was able to accomplish its mission on or ahead of schedule during 1996, the international community determined that an international military force was still required in Bosnia in order to provide a secure environment for civilian peace efforts to continue, and the U.N. Security Council and North Atlantic Council authorized a smaller SFOR to fill this role. Many observers believe that a similar justification will be invoked for a post-SFOR force. This situation has caused some observers to ask the question, what conditions in Bosnia would allow NATO to terminate its presence in Bosnia? What benchmarks can be identified that would constitute the equivalent of an exit strategy for NATO? In his December 18 statement, President Clinton said that the future NATO mission in Bosnia should be tied to specific benchmarks and not to a timetable. NATO is expected to develop these benchmarks in its planning for the post-SFOR force. At the November 6 seminar, Mr. McConnell referred to NATO's outline for the desired end-state in Bosnia:[8]

NATO's Desired End-State

- ***The political leaders of Bosnia's three ethnic groups demonstrate sustained commitment to negotiation as the means to resolve political and military differences between and within ethnic communities.***
- ***Bosnia's civil structures are sufficiently mature to assume responsibility for ensuring compliance with the DPA.***
- ***Bosnia's three ethnic groups adhere on a sustained basis to the military requirements of the DPA, including the virtual absence of violations or unauthorized activities.***
- ***Conditions are established for the safe continuation of ongoing nation-building activities.***

Source: Department of Defense, NATO

One aspect of the SFOR mission that received a lot of attention at the seminar was NATO's apparent broader interpretation of providing support to civilian agencies in recent months. On the one hand, IFOR and SFOR have always provided selected support to civil implementation in addition to their military tasks, but have never taken the lead in these civilian efforts. NATO and other defense officials deny that this support has been tantamount to "mission creep." They emphasize that neither IFOR nor SFOR has ever taken on any task not explicitly assigned to them by the political authorities, the North Atlantic Council (NAC). Only when the NAC has provided

[7] See also, U.S. General Accounting Office. *Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward Achieving the Dayton Agreement's Goals*. GAO/NSIAD-97-132. May 1997.

[8] Ibid.

additional political guidance, such as in the case of special police forces and the broadcast media, has SFOR expanded its duties. Tom Longstreth of the Office of the Secretary of Defense stressed the importance of upholding a clear distinction between military and civilian missions for SFOR and for any successor force to SFOR. In particular, he predicted that U.S. military leaders will insist that any future military force not be burdened with a larger mission or increased number of tasks as it is being drawn down in size.

On the other hand, other observers contend that one cannot deny that SFOR has assumed a more assertive approach in civil affairs in the past half-year. Moreover, these activities have had tangible effects on the behavior of the Bosnian parties. According to some observers, the two SFOR operations against indicted war criminals (in July and December 1997) substantially enhanced the credibility of international threats against war criminals. SFOR actions to take over hard-line and anti-SFOR Bosnian Serb media transmitters have had a political effect and such moves can be viewed as attempts to shape the political environment in the RS. One speaker, Hrair Balian of the International Crisis Group, contended that in general it is very difficult entirely to separate military and non-military tasks. He noted, for example, that the unarmed international police task force would be unable to perform its duties in potentially hostile environments without the presence of SFOR.

Assessments of Progress to Date

As noted above, the consensus view of seminar speakers was that more time was needed for peace to take firmer hold in Bosnia. Panelists' perspectives varied somewhat, however, on assessments of the level of progress reached thus far. The Dayton peace agreement itself establishes few benchmarks with which to measure success in building a functioning civil society in Bosnia. President Clinton and other Administration officials have emphasized that a post-SFOR mission should be tied to specific benchmarks instead of another deadline.

Mr. McConnell of the Defense Department acknowledged the difficulty in measuring progress, and presented numerous specific examples that would indicate both progress and problems in reaching NATO's end-state objectives. The positive and negative indicators as viewed by the Defense Department are outlined below.

Progress Measurements

Goal	Indicators
Commitment to Negotiations	· Parties have generally adhered to negotiated Article II and Article IV agreements on arms control. · Croatia recently mediated the surrender of several persons indicted for war crimes. · Progress is occurring on inter-entity telecommunications and civil aviation plans. · Brcko issue still unresolved. Parties are obstructionist in the wake of September 1996 elections and approaching 15 March 1998 decision. · RS power struggle between Plavsic and Krajisnik involves police forces (and other means) rather than political negotiations.
Regeneration of Civil Structures	· Municipal elections were non-violent, but implementation remains an issue. · Federation structures still separate. Joint government organizations have not materialized as planned. · The International Police Task Force has been unable to adequately improve local police services. Difficulty garnering international support for its improvement.
Commitment to Military Agreements	· Article II separation, demobilization, and confidence- and security-building measures mostly successful.

Progress Measurements	
	· Article IV heavy weapons reductions concluded 31 October 1997. Parties (largely) compliant. · Article V long-term regional arms control negotiations are likely to start mid-1998.
Nation-building	· Economic performance is improving, particularly in the Federation. More jobs and real GDP growth. · International aid is flowing to the region, the vast majority of it to Federation areas. RS participation is desired for the future. · Entities are beginning to integrate some economic activities. Some recent successes on infrastructure issues.

Source: Department of Defense.

The seminar heard from numerous additional observers to the Bosnia peace implementation process.

Antonio Pedauye, former Chief of the U.N. Mission in Bosnia, pointed to the structural challenges to Dayton implementation at the beginning of the process. The Dayton accords presented extremely difficult tasks to European institutions such as the OSCE and European Union. Compared to the U.N. structure, Mr. Pedauye noted that there was no unity of command on the civilian side and that the High Representative was given a very weak mandate over the multitude of international organizations involved.

John Hillen of the Council on Foreign Relations contended that the Dayton accords were not likely ever to be fully implemented. He viewed the accords as a necessarily flawed agreement forged primarily by the will of the primary negotiator, Richard Holbrooke. He could not conclude that events in Bosnia were evolving in the direction of a stable peace, and pointed to the lapsed deadlines for IFOR and SFOR as evidence of a fundamental problem with the accords. In contrast, former U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia John Menzies contended that Dayton was succeeding, even beyond initial expectations. Progress achieved in the past two years, according to Mr. Menzies, should encourage the international community to push forward with Dayton implementation.

James Gow of King's College in London and advisor to the U.N. war crimes tribunal sought to refute the view that no progress was made in the first year following Dayton. He pointed to the successful achievement of the two primary priorities of 1996 -- implementing the military aspects of Dayton with IFOR, and holding national elections. In the second stage, beginning as SFOR replaced IFOR, Mr. Gow identified three priorities. The first was to continue the constitutional and political integration of the country. The second task was to try to ensure the freedom of movement which would enable the return of displaced persons and refugees. The third priority was to take action on the question of indicted war criminals. Mr. Gow emphasized that the last issue has become the first priority, since there was little prospect of forward movement on political consolidation or refugee returns without the removal of most of the war criminals. For this reason, Mr. Gow lent great significance to the July 1997 NATO operation against two indictees and the surrender by Croatia of ten indictees to the Hague in October, the result of intense international diplomatic pressure.

Mr. Hrair Balian of the International Crisis Group office in Sarajevo perceived an enormous positive difference in the past half-year on the ground in all entities and communities in Bosnia, the Republika Srpska, the Muslim-controlled areas, and the Bosnian Croat-controlled areas. Mr. Balian attributed much of the change to SFOR's more robust engagement in civilian aspects of peace implementation. Specifically, SFOR's operation in Prijedor against indicted war criminals,

SFOR's takeover of broadcasting transmission towers, and SFOR's support to local police units loyal to Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic have all had a significant impact on the pace of peace implementation across the board, according to Mr. Balian. He also emphasized that his expression of cautious optimism should not obscure the enormous amount of work to be accomplished in the next six months, before SFOR is scheduled to leave, and in the post-SFOR period.

Potential Flashpoints

Many speakers agreed with the prognosis that conflict was likely to resume absent the presence of an international security force. How and when conflict would resume remains open to speculation. According to Mr. Balian of the International Crisis Group, the scenario under which hostilities may resume in Bosnia would not be a full-scale military assault by one side or the other. Two speakers, Mr. Balian and Mr. Gow, rejected the speculation that the Bosnian Federation armed forces were preparing for, or even capable of, an all-out attack on the RS with any reasonable chance of success in the near term, even with the aid provided by the U.S.-led military assistance program to the Federation.[9] Mr. Balian found it more likely that hostilities could result from escalation from smaller-scale incidents. For example, in strategically located areas such as Sanski Most or Brcko, tens of thousands of displaced persons still unable to return to their homes might attempt to take matters into their own hands, or even be encouraged to do so by local political authorities. Incidents on the IEBL, or on an inter-community divide in the case of the Croats and Muslims, could create counter-incidents that could grow unchecked if there was no credible international force on the ground.

One audience participant questioned whether Brcko was the most likely flashpoint. This strategic crossroads was left unresolved at Dayton and final binding arbitration was pushed off until March 1998. Speakers declined to speculate on whether a final resolution will be reached at that time, but some noted that the international community might consider the degrees to which the parties cooperate with the international supervisory bodies in Brcko. As critical as Brcko is to a lasting peace in Bosnia, speakers noted that an equally important key is Sarajevo, especially in regard to refugee returns (primarily ethnic Serbs). Speakers predicted that progress in returns to Sarajevo would directly impact prospects for returns in Brcko and elsewhere. Conversely, if there was no substantial return of Serbs to Sarajevo, one discussant expected no political breakthrough in refugee returns in the rest of Bosnia.

Post-SFOR Options

Current U.S. Policy

On December 18, 1997, President Clinton announced that the United States would take part in an international security presence in Bosnia when the NATO force withdraws in June 1998. The President outlined the following criteria for his approval of the NATO force: the mission must be achievable and tied to concrete benchmarks, not a deadline; the force must be able to protect itself; the United States must retain command of the force; the European allies must assume their share of responsibility by doing more; the cost must be manageable; and, the plan must have the support of Congress and the American public. President Clinton argued that the United States

[9] For more information on the train and equip program, see U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *Bosnia: U.S.- led Train and Equip Program*, by Steve Woehrel. CRS Report 96-735F. Updated August 19, 1997.

"should finish the job we began for the sake of (Bosnia's) future and in the service of our own interests and values."

In recent months, many Administration officials have asserted the premise that some form of international security presence should, and is likely to, remain in Bosnia after June 1998 in order to maintain stability.[10] Administration officials have also emphasized the need to press for greater progress in peace implementation prior to June 1998. Like its earlier position on IFOR, the Administration has asserted that SFOR's mission will end on schedule and not be extended, notwithstanding any possible successor mission. This position implies the exclusion of a strict *status quo* option though not a functional near equivalent. At meetings at NATO, Defense Secretary Cohen and Secretary of State Albright have strongly argued for a larger European role, i.e. greater financial and personnel resources, in key civilian areas such as policing.

Military Peacekeeping Options

At its defense ministerial meeting on December 2-3, 1997, NATO commissioned its defense planners to draw up options for a follow-on peacekeeping force to replace SFOR. NATO foreign ministers, meeting two weeks later, endorsed the development of these options, which are to be presented to the North Atlantic Council in mid-January 1998. NATO SACEUR General Wesley Clark has said that a final decision by NATO on a follow-on force should come by March 1, 1998.

The general post-SFOR options most commonly referred to in the media have been: the complete withdrawal of SFOR at the end of its mandate in June 1998; the withdrawal of NATO units to stations outside of Bosnia, or "over the horizon"; the replacement of SFOR with a new force under a different structure and/or mandate; and the continuation of SFOR at its current strength for an extended period. Most analysts and media commentary identified the third option, unofficially dubbed DFOR for Deterrence Force, as the most likely one. At the time of the November CRS/GAO seminar, NATO planning for future options had not officially begun and so actual planning specifics were unavailable. At the seminar, Ivo Daalder of the University of Maryland presented a range of generic options and outlined some premises and implications of each option.

Mr. Daalder's options derived from his view of the basic policy dilemma before the Administration, which is that while Bosnia will probably require an external military presence beyond June 1998, neither the allies alone nor the United States as part of a NATO force is likely to stay in Bosnia long enough for peace to become self-sustaining.

Mr. Daalder offered shorthand names to the basic options:

- **NoFOR** -- leave on schedule by mid-1998
- **SFORever** -- stay for the long haul
- **EFOR** -- hand mission over to the Europeans.

Each option has its own justification. The argument for NoFOR emphasizes the substantial investment already made in Bosnia and declines NATO or U.S. responsibility for nation-building. The SFORever option derives from the view that the NATO commitment to Bosnia remains fundamental to U.S. interests and that securing peace and stability in Bosnia justifies the commitment and costs of U.S. military assets for years to come. The EFOR option assumes that

[10] For example, see speech by National Security Advisor Sandy Berger at Georgetown University, September 23, 1997; and testimony by Ambassador Robert Gelbard before the House International Relations Committee, November 7, 1997.

the European interest in Bosnia is greater than that of the United States. It would hand over primary responsibility to the Europeans and test their commitment to develop the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI).[11]

Mr. Daalder argued further, however, that no option completely gets around the basic policy dilemma outlined above. The first, NoFOR, would risk the resumption of war. The second, SFORever, would be seen as politically untenable, and the third, EFOR, is unacceptable to the allies.

Mr. Daalder presented a refined option which he dubbed TFOR for Transition Force. TFOR would operate under the same mandate as SFOR, and presumably with a similar structure. The size of TFOR would depend on whether it would serve a deterrent function, as originally envisioned for the final stage of SFOR's deployment, or continue in the more assertive manner in which SFOR has begun to conduct itself in the last months. U.S. forces would serve in TFOR for another specified period, such as 18 months. After TFOR, a European-led force, EFOR, would take over, with U.S. forces available outside of Bosnia to provide emergency assistance.

A strategy for gaining U.S. and European support for this option would involve close consultation with Congress during which the Administration could offer this form of exit strategy. The concept might gain broader European acceptance, Mr. Daalder believes, if the operational command of TFOR were transferred from an American to a European by a certain date -- July 1, 1998, for example. TFOR and EFOR would remain NATO missions under NATO structures and with full NATO support systems. It was pointed out in the discussion period that U.S. personnel would still most likely be involved in supporting functions in a future European force, but that the key difference would be that it would not include U.S. combat units in Bosnia.

Some of the discussion over the options as presented focused on the concept of moving toward a greater European military role. One European discussant pointed out that the European countries want to bring their troops home at least as strongly as the United States, given that their troops had already served in Bosnia with UNPROFOR for three years before the NATO missions. A question was raised whether an all-European force would carry the same weight in Bosnia or be viewed with the same credibility by the local parties without the presence of U.S. troops. The European countries also continue to object to the U.S.-led program to equip and train the Bosnian Federation forces, on the grounds that such assistance is one-sided and destabilizing, and would likely raise these objections as a counter-argument to the full withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from Bosnia. On the U.S. side, it was also pointed out that it might be difficult for some in the United States to fathom a shift to a European command of TFOR if U.S. troops were still participating in the operation. Some policymakers have called for the Europeans to create a new police/security force for Bosnia, separate from and in addition to a post-SFOR force.[12]

Speakers and discussants also had different perspectives on the possible mission and mandate for a post-SFOR force. Under the TFOR option presented by Mr. Daalder, the concept of deadline is tied to the command and structure of the force, i.e., moving from a U.S. to a European-led force. Mr. McConnell reiterated the lack of enthusiasm within the Administration for any date or deadline concept for a post-SFOR force. Mr. Gow predicted that the new force will have largely the same tasks as SFOR, and suggested that it might commit to a general 2- to 5-year deployment that is focused on implementation tasks rather than a rigid schedule. President Clinton, in his

[11] For more information on the European Security and Defense Identity, see U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *NATO Adapts for New Missions: The Berlin Accord and Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF)*, by Stanley Sloan. CRS Report 96-561F. June 19, 1996.

[12] For example, see op-ed by Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. "Bosnia's Police: The Europeans," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 1997, p. A25.

December 18 announcement, admitted that the deadline approach was "a mistake" and said that the next Bosnia mission should be tied to concrete benchmarks. As examples of benchmarks, President Clinton cited sustainable joint political institutions, an independent media, a functioning civil police, and democratic rule over the military.

U.S. and Allied Interests

The issue of balance between the U.S. and European roles in Bosnia was the focus of the second part of the November 6 seminar. This section summarizes different perspectives on U.S. interests at stake in Bosnia, European viewpoints, public opinion findings, and perspectives from the media.

U.S. Perspectives

John Menzies, former U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia, stated that U.S. interests have evolved over the years. Historically, the former Yugoslav lands have always held importance for the United States, especially in the 20th century with the experience of both World Wars and the Cold War. During the early months of the war in Bosnia in 1992, the U.S. interest was sparked and driven by humanitarian concern for the victims of the war. Later, the failure of international diplomatic and military measures led some to question the effectiveness of the United Nations and for NATO. The question of whether or not the United States would assume leadership in the Bosnia case became more pressing as the war continued.

In 1995, U.S. interests intensified as the U.S. involvement, investment, and commitment to Bosnia grew. Mr. Menzies termed the peace process that took shape after the low-point of the Bosnian Serb summer offensives on Srebrenica and Zepa, and the dissolving U.N. mission surrounding these events, a "Pax Americana," an American peace. The leading role in forging a peace settlement played by then-Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke raised the U.S. stake in Bosnia and intensified the U.S. investment. For the sake of U.S. leadership, for NATO, and for Bosnia and the Balkans, Mr. Menzies asserted that the United States maintains a vital national interest in seeing the Dayton agreement succeed.

In the post-Dayton period, U.S. interests in peace implementation have mirrored the priorities of the Dayton agreement, according to Mr. Menzies. Specifically, the United States maintains an interest in seeing that a united Bosnia be maintained. The return of refugees, still a potentially war-fighting issue, is a priority. Bringing war criminals to justice, by whatever means are found to be most suitable, is a priority in his view. Economic renewal and the restructuring of political and civic institutions are also key to peace in Bosnia.

On a global level, Mr. Menzies asserted that the United States cannot leave the job in Bosnia unfinished, nor can it walk away from its own agreement and see war break out again, because of the U.S. and international investments already made to the peace process and the damage such a failure would have on U.S. global leadership. Similarly, Mr. Menzies stressed that NATO cannot afford the failure that Bosnia would represent if war resumed because the agreement was not implemented to its full extent.

An alternative perspective came from John Hillen of the Council on Foreign Relations. Mr. Hillen focused on the U.S. interest in moving away from a lead role in Bosnia to a supporting role if the international community ultimately decides on a long-term military commitment. He viewed the main issue to be the need for the United States to balance its world-wide military commitments, but not necessarily choose between all-or-nothing options (e.g., bring home all U.S. troops or remain in Bosnia in the current mission).

Mr. Hillen offered three primary reasons on why the United States should consider this shift.[13] The first was the overall strain on the readiness of U.S. forces all over the world. Mr. Hillen cited examples of excessive use of U.S. transport aircraft in Europe, and the impact of such overuse on the readiness of other units in the armed forces. He cited problems with morale, retention, and even recruitment. The current strain on manpower and materiel has also delayed procurement investments. While the Bosnia operation is not the only cause, it is a contributing factor, according to Mr. Hillen. Secondly, Mr. Hillen pointed to a growing divergence in military capabilities between the United States and Europe. Only the United States maintains advanced intelligence capabilities, Stealth aircraft, long-range strategic projection and logistic capabilities that enable the U.S. to quickly assemble a major military effort. The Europeans have also made deep cuts in defense spending and have made greater doctrinal shifts in the direction of peacekeeping. As such, the European allies remain completely dependent on the United States for even modest military campaigns. A third imperative is what Mr. Hillen called a divergence of interests. Mr. Hillen asserted that the United States has major interests elsewhere in the world, and that there should be some indication to the U.S. public and the Congress that what happens in Bosnia is at least a little more important to the European allies than to the United States. He questioned the fundamental incongruity between pronouncements on Bosnia's importance to the United States, if at the same time the European allies do not consider Bosnia important enough to stay on their own if the United States leaves.

Mr. Hillen noted that a solution to what he views as the need to move toward a greater European and lesser U.S. role in Bosnia is already in place in the form of NATO's Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF),[14] which offers in principle a degree of structural flexibility previously unknown to NATO. The overall objective would be to move toward a NATO force for Bosnia that is not totally dependent, politically and militarily, on U.S. leadership for the duration of an extended mission in Bosnia. The United States may still play a critical partnership role, but one that is supportive rather than leading.

The European and U.N. Experience

European perspectives on military options in the Balkans are shaped in part by their experience with the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) during the Bosnian war from 1992 to 1995. NATO allies such as France, Britain, and the Netherlands contributed the bulk of troops to the U.N. forces, while a NATO operation (including U.S. forces) controlled the skies. Many European officials draw a strong contrast between their troops' experiences in UNPROFOR and with the NATO missions after Dayton. Among the many differences, European officials emphasize the role and impact of U.S. troops on the ground in Bosnia since the end of 1995.

John Sawers of the British Embassy emphasized the long struggle borne largely by the Europeans during the years prior to the achievement at Dayton. He said that while the European experience in UNPROFOR was mixed, European troops constituted the bulk of the force since 1992. By June 1998, British troops will have been deployed in Bosnia for six years. From 1992 to 1994, various peace proposals forged by European and U.N. diplomacy failed to end the conflict. The international community remained deeply divided, leading to tensions that some argue forestalled an earlier settlement. Mr. Sawers considered that the effectiveness of the common Western approach to Bosnia established since Dayton should not be underestimated.

[13] See also Hillen, John. "After SFOR: Planning a European -Led Force," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Spring 1997, p. 75-79.

[14] For additional information on CJTF, see Sloan, Stanley. *NATO Adapts for New Missions....*

Ambassador Antonio Pedauye of the Spanish Foreign Ministry offered additional points of contrast between the post-Dayton situation in Bosnia and the U.N. experience during his tenure as UNPROFOR and U.N. Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH)[15] chief of mission from 1995 to early 1996. In Bosnia, the United Nations was faced with the fundamental contradiction of deploying a peace mission in a country at war, with no peace to keep or even a cease-fire to monitor. UNPROFOR had a limited mandate and limited rules of engagement. According to Mr. Pedauye, the increasing U.S. involvement in forging a peace settlement in 1995, with the awareness of the military risks and responsibilities that went along with this leadership role, was a crucial factor in achieving an end to the war. Moreover, the Europeans welcomed the American assertiveness after years of failed peace efforts and of trans-Atlantic rifts over policy in the Balkans. The Europeans had devoted much time, effort, and military and financial resources to the Bosnia conflict, but in the end recognized the limitations to their power in the Balkans.

Looking toward a possible new multinational force in Bosnia, Mr. Sawers emphasized the fairness, in his view, of existing burdensharing arrangements. European troops constitute over two-thirds of the force, in contrast to the U.S. participation of one-quarter of the total. Two of three SFOR commands are led by Europeans. The current British contingent in SFOR comprises about 5% of the British army, a substantial commitment of its forces. Mr. Sawers also contended that the European share of the civilian effort, particularly in reconstruction aid, is even greater. Nevertheless, Mr. Sawers saw even a minority U.S. presence on the ground in a possible future NATO force as essential. The United States supplies essential military assets to the mission. U.S. ground forces lend a unique deterrence role to the ground operation. A continued U.S. ground presence would ensure that the United States maintains similar interests to other troop-contributing countries, and keep international military and political efforts more closely linked than they were with UNPROFOR. For these reasons, Mr. Sawers concluded that the current proportionality is the correct one and should be upheld for any future military operation and civilian effort. In the discussion period, Mr. Sawers challenged the view expressed by other speakers and audience members that Bosnia should mean more to Europe than the United States by virtue of the fact that Bosnia is situated in Europe. Mr. Sawers countered that the United States has profound security interests and commitments in Europe, just as some European countries have interests and commitments in the western hemisphere.

Public Opinion and the Media

The seminar heard from representatives from a public opinion analysis institute and from the media. Mr. Stephen Kull of the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland presented findings from a variety of polling sources on different aspects of the U.S. military engagement in Bosnia. He examined three basic areas of U.S. public sentiment: opinion on U.S. troops being in Bosnia, on having U.S. troops stay longer than June 1998, and on the likely reaction to U.S. fatalities in Bosnia.

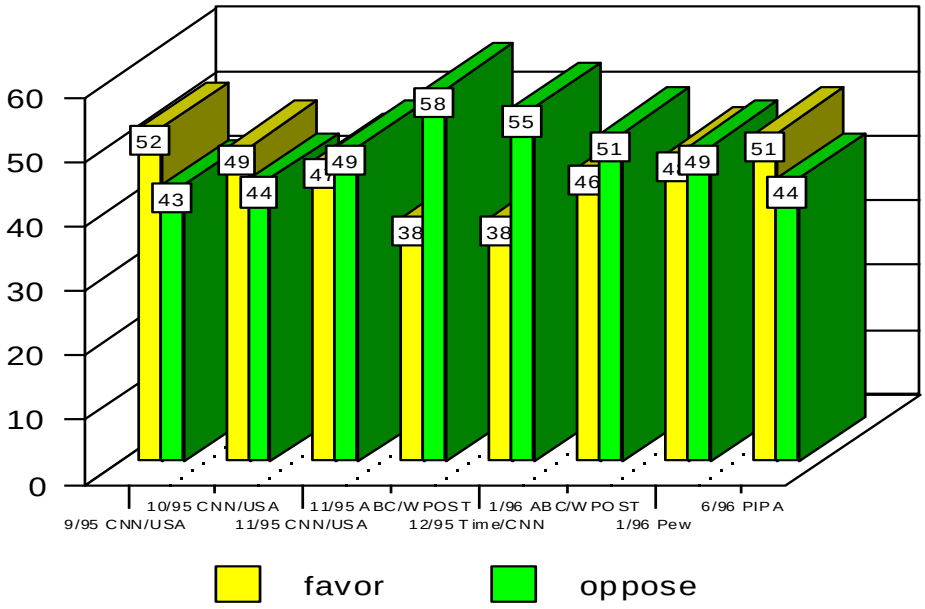
On the first question, Mr. Kull presented data from 1995 to 1996 that showed a consistent split in U.S. opinion on sending U.S. troops as part of an international peacekeeping force in Bosnia (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The share of those opposed was highest in the months d irectly preceding the U.S. deployment (November and December 1995), reflecting what Mr. Kull called a “cold feet” phenomenon, but later dropped to its earlier levels. In Mr. Kull’s view, the U.S. public was not so much divided as ambivalent on this question of U.S. troops participating

[15] UNPROFOR ceased to exist after it transferred authority to NATO’s Implementation Force in December 1995. Ongoing U.N. civilian operations in Bosnia comprise the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH).

in Bosnia peacekeeping. The ambivalence reflects favorable and unfavorable considerations underlying the umbrella question of sending U.S. troops to Bosnia.

Bosnia: Send troops as part of international peacekeeping force?

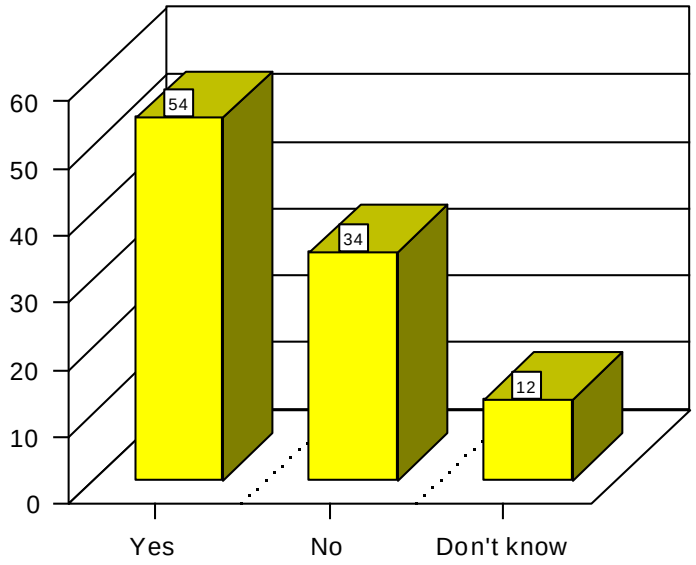
Figure 1.



On the favorable side, a majority of Americans, on the basis of numerous polls, has consistently supported U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping *in principle* over the past number of years. A January 1997 poll showed that a majority of those polled also supported the use of NATO for such peacekeeping duties, specifically in Bosnia (figure 2).

Do you think NATO forces, including U.S. troops, should...be used to provide peacekeeping in countries bordering NATO members, such as Bosnia?

Figure 2.



Source: Pew, January 1997

On the justification for sending U.S. forces to Bosnia, Mr. Kull suggested that the U.S. public is not overly concerned with Bosnia's direct bearing on U.S. national interests. Rather, a majority accepts the linkage of the conflict in Bosnia to more direct U.S. interests, and also responds to humanitarian considerations. For example, in December 1995, shortly before U.S. troops were deployed to Bosnia, 64% of a polling sample concurred that "stopping more people from being killed" was a good enough reason to send U.S. troops to Bosnia. 63% thought "keeping the war from spreading to other parts of Europe" was reason enough. Only 29% agreed with the rationale that the United States should maintain its role as world leader.[16]

On the negative side, Mr. Kull suggested that there is not clarity among the U.S. public that the Bosnia operation is in fact multilateral. He noted that polling questions that do not specify the multilateral aspect, but simply ask whether U.S. troops should be in Bosnia, get about 10% less support than questions that do make this specification. The difference reflects opposition to the idea of the United States going into Bosnia unilaterally and a lack of clarity over whether this is the case or not. A related downward pull on public support is a concern about the United States contributing more than its fair share. A January 1997 poll showed that 45% of the pool thought (incorrectly) that the United States was contributing "most" of the troops in Bosnia.[17] According to Mr. Kull, what Americans think represents a "fair share" is 20- to 25-percent of the total force, a share that roughly corresponds to the actual share of U.S. forces in SFOR. A third negative factor is the strong perception that emerges from polls that the NATO operation in Bosnia is not succeeding in finding a way to permanently end the fighting there: a September 1997 poll showed that only 27% of respondents thought that SFOR had improved the chances for a lasting peace in Bosnia, while 61% thought that it had not (figure 3). In Mr. Kull's interpretation, the public's

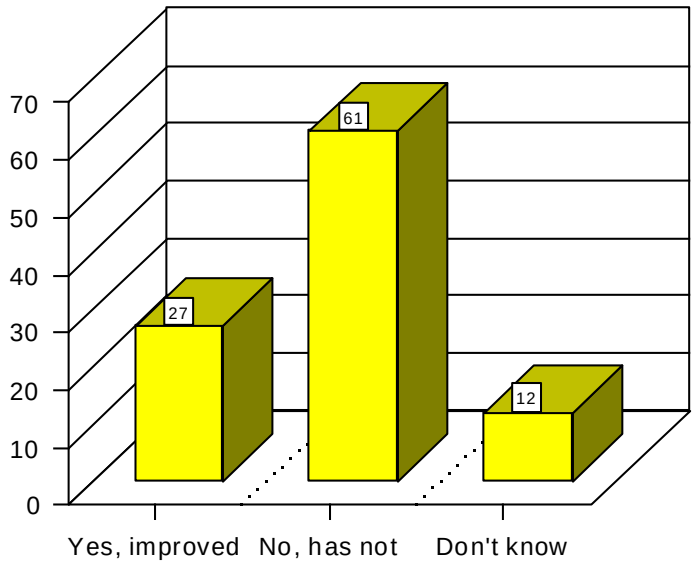
[16] CBS/New York Times poll, December 1995, provided by PIPA.

[17] Pew, January 1997, provided by PIPA.

negative assessment of the NATO mission's performance reflects its desire for a more assertive approach by NATO in carrying out its mission. He cited in support a mid-1996 poll showed that 70% of those polled favored NATO carrying out the arrest of the two top Bosnian Serb indicted war criminals.[18]

Do you believe that sending U.S. and other NATO forces to Bosnia has improved the chances of finding a way to permanently end the fighting there, or not?

Figure 3.



Source: Pew, September 1997

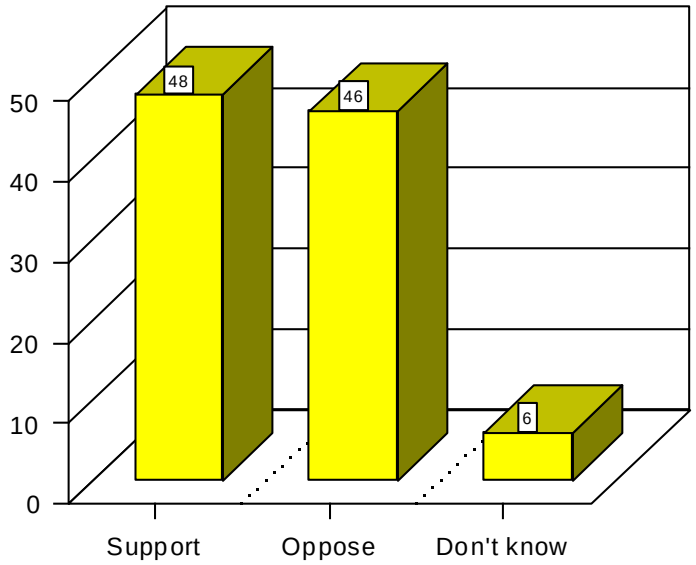
On the second question about U.S. troops staying longer than June 1998, a September 1997 poll showed about the same split -- 48% favor, 46% against, 6% don't know -- that exists for the current situation (figure 4).The attitude for or against a continued deployment is heavily influenced by the respondents' perception of the NATO mission's success. For example, of those respondents who believe that the Bosnia mission has improved chances for peace, 76% favor an extension of the mission, and 20% oppose. Of those respondents who believe that the mission has not improved chances for peace, only 37% favor an extension, while 59% oppose.[19]

[18] PIPA, June 1996.

[19] Pew, September 1997, provided by PIPA.

If peace depended on the continued presence of U.S. troops, would you support an extension of the American military mission there, or would you oppose it?

Figure 4.



Source: Pew, September 1997

On the last question regarding possible U.S. fatalities, a poll taken in April 1995 asked for responses to a scenario where U.S. forces were deployed in Bosnia and experienced 200 fatalities. More than half of the respondents favored forceful options such as striking back or calling in reinforcements, and about one quarter favored withdrawal. Again, Mr. Kull tied the question of casualties to the perception of success. If the operation is viewed as generally successful, then acceptance of fatalities in the context of a more assertive operation is greater. In contrast, if the operation is perceived as failing, fatalities will further diminish support for the operation.

Finally, the seminar heard from Ms. Barbara Starr, correspondent with *Jane's Defense Weekly*, for a perspective from the media. She first noted that no journalist covering this issue would probably consider it news that the United States is likely to remain in Bosnia, even though no formal decision had yet been made. Instead, the media was likely to focus on the level of candor with which policymakers discuss future options in Bosnia, and the potential challenges or policy issues that may lay ahead.

In her view, the issue of war criminals is likely to remain a significant challenge for the current military operation and for a possible future one. NATO has continued to eschew responsibility for apprehending war criminals, with the exception of the one operation in July 1997 (and later, the second operation in December 1997). If the international community considers the issue of war criminals to be an important, if not key, factor in securing peace, Ms. Starr wondered how long it can pass off responsibility onto the Bosnian, Croatian, and Yugoslav parties. Another significant challenge for a post-SFOR force concerns community policing in Bosnia and the securing of law and order for everyday life. The prevalence of road blocks on all sides remains a problem throughout Bosnia. The specific force package for a post-SFOR force is another issue to be watched closely, in her view. The experience of IFOR and SFOR has demonstrated the value of specific pieces of military equipment; Ms. Starr noted the success of certain scout reconnaissance aircraft and types of armored vehicles that have been effective in a heavily mined region. On the

Bosnian side, Ms. Starr doubted that anyone could fully assess the final impact of the train-and-equip program to the Federation at this time.

From a broader perspective, Ms. Starr raised the ongoing tension with Iraq as another example where the United States may be militarily involved for some time to come. Although the situations in Iraq and Bosnia differ greatly, in both situations policymakers must consider what criteria they may use to measure success, and what their exit strategy should be. U.S. policymakers also have to consider the possibility of a major military contingency somewhere in the world, and the implications that would have for the U.S. role in Bosnia. Ms. Starr doubted that the forward deployment of approximately 8,000 U.S. troops would by itself represent too heavy a strain on the U.S. military, even with a major regional conflict at hand. However, she noted that the United States was likely to retain a key tactical role in providing command and control and strategic lift capabilities to any NATO mission in Bosnia, even if the Europeans took on a larger role. Thus it seemed apparent to this speaker that as long as the NATO mission is sustained, U.S. forces were likely to remain in Bosnia in some form or another for some time to come.

Appendix. List of Panel Participants

Hrair Balian, International Crisis Group

James Covey, National Security Council

Ivo Daalder, Center for International and Security Studies, University of Maryland

James Gow, King's College, London

Donna Heivelin, General Accounting Office

John Hillen, Council on Foreign Relations

Julie Kim, Congressional Research Service

Stephen Kull, Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland

John Lampe, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Thomas Longstreth, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense

Bernd McConnell, Director, Bosnia Task Force, Department of Defense

John Menzies, U.S. Institute of Peace (Department of State)

Antonio Pedauye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain

John Sawers, Embassy of the United Kingdom

Stanley Sloan, Congressional Research Service

Barbara Starr, *Jane's Defense Weekly*

Steve Woehrel, Congressional Research Service

Bosnia Options After June 1998: Summary of a CRS/GAO Seminar

Summary

This report draws in part on information presented at a CRS-GAO hosted seminar held on November 6, 1997. Support for this seminar was provided in part by the General Accounting Office and the Henry M. Jackson Foundation.

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